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Book Reviews

TEXTS FROM THE YALE BABYLONIAN COLLECTION

The interest of students was aroused some time ago by the publication of the first of a series of volumes which are to give to the Assyriological world the philological and archaeological material of the Babylonian collection gathered during the past few years by Professor Clay for Yale University.¹ In this first volume are presented "texts of a miscellaneous character, covering a period between four and five thousand years. There are historical texts, votive and building inscriptions, a dynastic list, date-lists, a tablet containing the most ancient laws known, a fragment of the Hammurabi Code, and also a boundary stone, a mortuary inscription, a syllabary, etc."

A collection of texts of this kind usually furnishes us a new batch of names of rulers who presented votive offerings to this or that god for the life of so-and-so. This volume is no exception to the rule, so we now have a good many more dry bones to rattle. Nevertheless the historian will find much in the volume that is worth his while. Although they raise new questions, such texts as Nos. 26 (Year Date-list of Amar-Sin), 32 (The Larsa Dynastic List), and 33 (Date-list of Babylon's Rule over Larsa) have done much toward unraveling the tangle of dynasties of the latter half of the third millennium B.C. The Sumerian prototype of the Hammurabi Code (No. 28) throws most welcome light upon the evolution of Babylonian law. It is too bad that the fragment of the Hammurabi Code (No. 34) is so small. This copy seems to have been the work of a very careless copyist—I find two lines missing in Col. 2. The Yale Syllabary (No. 53) is a feast for the lexicographer. It looks as if this and the Chicago Syllabary were "pages" from the same dictionary. Texts Nos. 46-51 furnish the author occasion for remarks on the Babylonian Sabbath. Whether Professor Clay's interpretation of these interesting texts is correct remains to be seen. Here we find a rather characteristic reference to "the critical position" which the author declares "is simply a hypothesis, and cannot be proved." Elsewhere (p. 44) we are told that—

not a few scholars place no dependence on the historical value of the coalition of the kings mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, but since the many discoveries which have a bearing upon this part of the chapter referring to foreign political affairs verify the data set forth in it; and, on the other hand, since not a single discovery in any way has impaired its accuracy, the only reasonable

¹ *Miscellaneous Inscriptions in the Yale Babylonian Collection*. By A. T. Clay. New Haven, 1915. Pp. viii+108. 55 plates.

conclusion is that its statements, until proved incorrect, must be utilized in the reconstruction of the history of the period, especially if they synchronize with what is fact.

The fact that a hypothesis is brought forward by a "critic" is enough to damn it in the eyes of Professor Clay.

But there is another hypothesis, which receives much more respectful (and generous) attention in the volume—namely, the author's own "Amurru" hypothesis. This hypothesis, we are told in the Preface, met "with opposition on the part of some scholars. . . . Some have accepted the theory, while those who have not done so, have advanced little more than categorical assertions that it is baseless." If this is so, then the author of the hypothesis is receiving a dose of his own medicine. But the reviewer fails to see any "opposition" on the part of scholars to the Amurru hypothesis. If they are not convinced, there is no reason for attributing this to any hardness of heart or head. The man who puts forward a hypothesis must convince scholars working in the same field that his hypothesis accounts for the facts better than any other hypothesis. To the reviewer the trouble seems to lie in the *kind* of evidence upon which the Amurru hypothesis was based. This new volume is full of the same kind of evidence as that adduced in *Amurru, the Home of the Northern Semites*. If we could show on the *basis of etymologies* that every god known later in Babylonia came from Amurru we should still be far short of having proved that the Semites had developed anything worthy the name of culture before they entered Babylonia.

One need not stop to say that texts copied by Professor Clay are well done. A number of errors crept into the book, but most of these have already been noticed by other scholars and collected on slips of "errata" by the author. We shall all be waiting eagerly for the next volume. The reviewer hopes that the "epics, hymns, and liturgies" in the Yale collection will soon be published.

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A SUMMARY OF TALMUDIC ETHICS¹

The *En Jacob* is a Hebrew work compiled by Jacob ibn Chabib, a Spanish Jew, who was expelled from Spain in 1492 and settled in Saloniki. It contains all the aggadic, or moral and didactic, portions of the Babylonian Talmud, arranged in the order of their occurrence in the separate tractates of the Talmud. The purpose of the compiler was to exhibit the profound ethical spirit and character of talmudic literature, and thus to defend the Talmud and Judaism against the calumnies of Jewish apostates. The work was first published in 1516 and at once became popular. It has since

¹ *En Jacob, Agada of the Babylonian Talmud, by Rabbi Jacob ibn Chabib, revised and translated into English.* Vol. I. Edited by Rabbi S. H. Glick. New York: Glick, 5676 (1916). 247 pages.